

WASHINGTON, DCB U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) announced that last night the House of Representatives authorized federal funding for several Oregon water projects. The projects were included in H.R. 1495, the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA), at the request of DeFazio, a senior member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee which drafted the legislation. The projects were approved as part of a House-Senate conference agreement on WRDA, legislation to authorize funding for the Army Corps of Engineers navigation, flood control and environmental restoration projects.

“This legislation is good for the economy and good for the environment,” said DeFazio. “Funding for these projects will create much needed jobs and provide a boost to the economy; it will enhance navigation and enable our ports to remain competitive internationally; and it will improve fish habitat and water quality in Oregon's lakes, streams and rivers.”

Projects authorized under WRDA at the request of DeFazio:

- \$35 million is authorized for the Albany Wastewater Treatment Project, which would expand the City of Albany's treatment plant to minimize the frequency and severity of sanitary sewer overflows into the Willamette River. Federal funds would be used to improve water quality and restore habitat along the Santiam and Willamette Rivers;
- The legislation lifts the cap on the number of days the federal west coast dredges Essayons and Yaquina can operate. The increased availability of these dredges will help meet the safety and navigation needs of Oregon's coastal ports;
- Language allowing the Secretary of the Army to treat the work carried out to repair the embankment dam at Fern Ridge Lake as a dam safety project. This will significantly reduce the amount of funding irrigators are required to contribute to the project;
- The transfer of unused land and three houses from the Corps to the Lowell School District. The school district plans to use the houses as rental properties for families with school age children, and may eventually expand school facilities to the property;
- A provision allowing the Army Corps of engineers to modify or eliminate deed restrictions on property owned by the City of Lowell and to allow the conveyance of land from the Corps to the City of Lowell, all of which will enable the city to work with St. Vincent dePaul to develop an affordable housing project;
- \$15 million is authorized for studies and ecosystem restoration projects to protect, monitor and restore fish and wildlife habitat for the Upper Willamette River watershed from Albany to the headwaters of the Willamette and tributaries. Priority is to be given to restore the Eugene Mill Race;
- \$5 million is authorized for a study to determine the feasibility of undertaking ecosystem restoration and fish passage improvements on rivers throughout the State of Oregon;

The projects authorized under this bill must receive funding through the congressional appropriations process. The Senate must now pass the bill before it goes to the President for his signature .